



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Appropriations Committee
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HB 6350 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the opportunity to address the Governor's budget proposal.

HB 6350, An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, continues to demonstrate the Governor's support for education, despite the state's fiscal constraints. The economic challenges are faced at all levels of government, and felt most intensely at the local level during the current budget development and adoption season. Rising local costs, in addition to the increased expectations and related costs for implementation of Common Core State Standards, educator evaluation and support, and secondary school reform, will likely exceed the increases in the education cost sharing grant in all districts. For the Alliance Districts, the increase in ECS funding again comes with a requirement that the funds be expanded pursuant to a plan approved by the Commissioner. We urge you to insure that these districts have the flexibility to include support for existing initiatives in their plans.

In addition, the elimination of the transportation grant will have a significant impact on education budgets into the future, when the hold harmless provision expires. Connecticut, unlike some other states, provides that transportation is part of a student's right to a free public education, therefore districts must continue to provide the services. Similarly the continuation of the cap on the special education excess cost grant, which was designed as the safety net for local school districts facing extraordinary individual student special education costs, creates fiscal uncertainty at the local level.

CABE also urges you to address the issue of magnet school tuition for preschool students, and remove this obligation from local school districts. This creates a significant inequity, since districts are generally unable to offer preschool programs due to fiscal constraints.

We are concerned that the inclusion of PILOT funds in the ECS Grant will make application of the minimum budget requirement (MBR) increasingly difficult in future years, and we urge you to carefully examine the ramifications of this change to insure that the MBR clearly provides that ECS grant increases are available for use by the school system.

We appreciate your attention to this issue.